

The January HORT REPORT

LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE

- If we have had no rain, water lawns, trees and shrubs, especially broadleaf and narrow leaf evergreens. Also, double check moisture in protected or raised planters and beds under eaves. *Note: 1 inch of snow = 1/10 inch of water.*
- Check on supplies of pesticides. Secure a copy of current recommendations and post them in a convenient place. Dilution and quantity tables are useful. Commercial applicators and other green professionals need to have MSDS accessible by employees.
- If you did not treat young pines for tip borers in November, do so before March with a contact insecticide to the tree trunk, limbs, and bark, to kill any active borers that are inside the tree. *Bayer Advanced Tree & Shrub Drench* is a pyrethroid that delivers a quick knock down of insects on trees. Available at *ROSS SEED CO. / TRUE VALUE HARDWARE!*
- Check that gardening tools and equipment are in good shape. Sharpen, paint, and repair: mowers, edger, sprayers, and dusters.
- Inspect your irrigation system and replace worn or broken parts.
- Control over-wintering insects on deciduous trees and shrubs with dormant oil sprays. These can be applied in late fall and winter when temperatures are above 40 degrees. *Note: DO NOT use dormant oils on evergreens.*
- A product containing glyphosate plus a post emergent broadleaf herbicide can be used on dormant Bermuda in January or February, when temperatures are above 50 degrees, for winter weed control.

PLANNING FOR A VIEW

A four-season garden gives you a chance to discover the special joys of every month. With a little planning now, you can create a year-around sanctuary to enjoy with the birds and wildlife that share it with you. In the winter I like to see the snow from a distance – as in, from the inside of my house! Planting for winter interest ensures I will have a great view from my window.

What are your garden goals for Spring?

PLAN NOW! For winter interest, be mindful of what you are planting this Spring. Chose options that provide beautiful foliage AND provide a bounty of food and shelter for wildlife during the fall. *See Barbara's top picks, below.*

CRANBERRY COTONEASTER (AKA: *Cotoneaster Apiculatus*)

A medium sized shrub with spreading, arch shaped, branches that are covered in small shiny leaves. Pink blossoms line the branches in the spring, followed by

beautiful red berries in the fall that brighten the winter months and feed the birds. A great addition to a wildlife garden.



Cranberry Cotoneaster Details:

- Deciduous shrub.
- USDA Zones: 4-7, *Cold hardy (-10 to 20 degrees).*
- Light Needs: Partial to Full Sun.
- Water Needs: Water regularly - weekly, or more often in extreme heat.
- Growth Rate: Moderate.
- Average Size at Maturity: 3' tall, 6' wide.
- Bloom Time: Spring
- Special Features: Bird friendly, easy care, fall color, ornamental berries, year-round interest.

BRIGHT FANTASY SNOWBERRY (AKA: Symphoricarpos Bokrabright)

Light pink summer blooms, followed by large white fruit in the fall, becomes especially showy on the otherwise bare stems in winter. The perfect plant for spicing up native landscapes and wild garden woodlands. Berry filled stems are excellent in floral arrangements and for the birds.



Bright Fantasy Snowberry Details:

- Deciduous shrub.
- USDA Zones: 3-7.

- Light Needs: Partial to Full Sun.
- Water Needs: Water regularly - weekly, or more often in extreme heat.
- Growth Rate: Moderate.
- Average Size at Maturity: 4' tall, 4' wide.
- Garden Style: Cottage.
- Bloom Time: Summer
- Special Features: Bird friendly, easy care, highly ornamental berries, year-round interest.

WINTER BIRD OF THE MONTH

The MAJESTIC... **BLUE JAY!**

Blue Jays are one of the most recognizable birds in North America. This common large songbird is familiar to many people, with its perky crest; Blue, white, and black plumage; and noisy calls. Blue jays are known for their intelligence and complex social systems with tight family bonds. Blue jays prefer tray feeder or hopper feeders on a post rather than hanging feeders, and they prefer peanuts, sunflower seeds, and suet, **AVAILABLE AT ROSS SEED!**

**We carry roasted peanuts in the shell, seasonally! Currently available for \$2.50 per lb.*



BLUE JAY FACTS:

- Blue Jays are not actually blue, the pigment in their feathers is actually brown. Scattering light in the structural parts of the feathers causes us to see the blue coloration.
- Male and female blue jays look the same. This is rare in the birding world and it is called sexual monomorphism. Most species of birds have males and females that look quite different from each other but since their plumage is the same it is difficult to tell sexes apart. Usually, males will be larger than females.
- They live a long time. The average age of a wild bird is typically 5-7. This number varies wildly based on the individual bird and environment. However, the oldest known blue jay was 26 years old!
- Blue Jays are the local alarm system for other birds. One of the main predators for the blue jays is the Red-shouldered Hawk. Blue Jays are so smart they can imitate the sound of hawks when they are spotted to alert other birds.

- Blue Jays can be bullies. Some say they have a pack mentality. They are very cooperative with their species, and a group of jays will often drive off other birds that are using “their” feeders.
- Blue Jays have monogamous bonds. Once the female chooses their mate, they typically become monogamous mates for life. Both males and females build the nest and rear the young. While the female is sitting on her eggs, the male will feed and take care of her. The tight bond doesn’t end there. The entire family will leave the nest and travel together once the young are around 17-21 days old.
- They are omnivores. They eat both animal and plant foods, mainly sticking to vegetation, berries, acorns, and seeds.
- Blue jays are in the same family as the crow. As members of the crow family, they are regarded as some of the most intelligent and curious species of animals in the world.
- There are four species of blue jays. In our area, we see the Western Blue Jay.

THE TAKEAWAY... Blue Jays are loud, boisterous, birds that typically make a big entrance. Love them or hate them, these birds are survivors, spurred on by their phenomenal intelligence. They can be loud, and they can be bullies, but they are also beautiful creatures that deserve our respect and admiration. Given the appropriate feeders, food, and preparation, they will make a beautiful addition to your back yard.

***BONUS* Blue Jay meaning and symbolism**

Blue Jays are said to represent the following qualities:

- Boldness
- Intelligence
- Faithfulness
- Determination
- Communication
- Vibrancy

Some say that seeing or hearing a blue jay may be a sign that you should adopt or ponder one or more of the qualities.

THAT'S ALL FOR NOW!